

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Shirley Middle School
August 24, 2004

Present: Gary Bourassa, Chairperson
Hugh Muffoletto, Vice Chairperson
Paul Wilson
Bob Prescott
Don Parker

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Cheryl Hayden, FinCom

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Public Participation:

As there was none, the committee moved forward to discuss Old Business.

Old Business:

Mr. Muffoletto motioned to approve the minutes of the June 30, July 20 and August 2, 2004 meetings. The motioned was seconded by Mr. Parker. The motion was approved. Mr. Muffoletto motioned to approve the minutes of the Executive Session meetings on July 20 and August 2, 2004. Mr. Parker seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Dr. Scott informed the committee that he had spoken with June Allison of NEASC. Ms. Allison thought that it was a great idea to start the accreditation process in September 2005. Dr. Scott stated that perhaps the PTA would be able to donate money to fund the process. Dr. Scott also stated that once school starts in September he hopes to have teachers express an interest in being part of a visitation committee that would travel to other schools to see how the process of accreditation works.

Patricia Stern discussed the Facilities and Grounds staffing issues. She stated that the department is currently working without a Supervisor and one full time day staff member due to the hiring freeze. The day staff position, however, has been temporarily filled with two part-time workers during the summer months. Mrs. Stern expressed her concern that the facilities and grounds department cannot operate to their full expectations without these positions filled and asked that the hiring freeze be lifted. She stated that she would like to fill the supervisor position with a 12 ½ hour per week person who would be responsible for the training and scheduling of employees as well as maintaining inventory and placing orders. Her ideal candidate would also have mechanical knowledge. These two positions, as well as two 2 hour per day workers at Devens and Shirley Middle School, would fall within the current budget constraints. Mrs. Stern stated that even though she has taken on the supervisor's responsibilities she feels that her focus should be more on the budgetary issues. Mr. Muffoletto stated that he feels the committee

should wait until they have discussed the deficit issues before making any decisions about hiring staff. He stated that these positions need to be placed on a priority list as to what is most beneficial to the children. After a brief discussion the members agreed to hold any decisions until after the deficit budget review.

The Shirley Middle School's improvement plan was discussed briefly. Mr. Parker wished to congratulate all who worked to develop the plan. Mr. Parker motioned to approve the plan. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. The Shirley Middle School improvement plan was approved.

Dr. Scott informed the committee that the Life Skills program is up and running; however, Ayer has decided to pull out of the program. Mr. Muffoletto questioned whether the program would be able to operate within the budget if Shirley was solely responsible for its funding. Dr. Scott informed him that with the three children enrolled in the program, the Life Skills program is operating within the approved budget.

The committee briefly discussed a parent's concern over the playground at Lura A. White. Mrs. Stern assured the committee that all issues brought up in the parent's letter are being addressed.

Business Affairs:

Mrs. Stern reviewed the preliminary year-end financial statement. The information was broken down to include all sourced of revenue, including the money that is owed to the school district from the School Building Committee for items that were necessary to purchase in order for the middle school to open. This also includes the additional labor costs that were necessary from both the custodial staff and the administrative team to organize and then reorganize the transition between the two schools. Mrs. Stern stressed that these are preliminary numbers and that the end-of-year financial statement will be examined one more time before the final closing of the books for FY04.

Mrs. Stern reviewed payroll warrants 305 and 805.

New Business:

The committee moved forward to discuss the budget deficit. At a previous Deficit Committee meeting, Dr. Scott was given the task of bringing to the School Committee a school budget that would reflect the entire \$422,000 reduction. Dr. Scott presented this budget, with items listed in order of priority if the cuts did indeed come entirely from the school. Dr. Scott indicated that there was already a reduction in high school tuition costs as Ayer and Lunenburg High Schools are not schooling as many of the Shirley students as they have in the past. He also included the already cut positions of Physical Education teacher, Middle School SPED teacher and LAW SPED teacher. New on his list were the middle school Spanish teacher, a 4th grade teacher, three teacher assistants, a reading specialist, the library/media coordinator and the Director of SPED. These positions amount to a total savings of \$453,000.

Mr. Muffoletto expressed his concern that too many of the cuts were made to the teaching staff and not enough has been done to make the cuts throughout the entire staff. Mrs.

Stern stated that in previous years cuts have been made in the custodial and administrative assistant areas; the school district is currently operating with a lean custodial staff.

If the school department were to come up with half of the money needed, approximately \$215,000, suggestions included hiring a part-time SPED director, cutting all requested custodial positions, a teacher assistant, reducing secretarial hours by 10%, and the possibility of increased class sizes.

The committee moved on to discuss the proposed policies for Walkers /Riders(bus). Dr. Scott explained that with any policy that is to be adopted there must be a first and second reading. Dr. Scott gave the first reading of this proposed policy which defined which students the school was required to transport to school. This was based on where the students' home is located with proximity to the school and grade level. Dr. Scott explained that this is often a confusing issue and that the school department needs clearly defined guidelines so that it may respond to parents who inquire about special consideration for their children. Mr. Prescott clarified that by adopting these policies we would propose that bus transportation would be streamlined, but at what overall savings. Dr. Scott stated that he was unsure of what the savings would be. Mr. Muffoletto commented that this issue would require serious debate and he suggested that any decisions be tabled until after the budget has been resolved and they are able to get input from the school council. The committee agreed.

Dr. Scott read the first reading of the Student Transportation Fees policy. He stated that this information is taken directly from Massachusetts General Law. Mr. Parker motioned to approve the first reading of this policy. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

The committee reviewed the renewal requests of two families to home school their children, Abigail Farnsworth and Alexis and Meagan LaVertue. Mr. Wilson motioned to approve. Mr. Prescott seconded the requests. The motion was approved.

Next on the agenda was the LAW 2004-2005 Student Handbook and Calendar. Dr. Scott stated that the PTA paid for the handbook to be set up in a calendar format. He requested that the committee vote on the content of the handbook. Mr. Wilson motioned to approve the handbook. Mr. Parker seconded the motion. Mr. Muffoletto abstained from voting. The motion was approved.

As there was no Correspondence tonight the committee moved forward to review the Information portion of the agenda.

Information:

Dr. Scott presented the committee with a previously requested update on the drug and alcohol related issues at the middle school during the last school year.

Dr. Scott reviewed the Pupil and Financial Report, an audit of June 30, 2003. He explained that there was one finding where an expenditure was inadvertently left off the report. The auditor, Dr. Scott explained, was not overly concerned about this as it did not impact the report. Dr. Scott also stated that there was another finding on procedures 13 and 14 which revolved around numbers given by the Town on the Schedule 19 report. Dr. Scott stressed that these findings were all related to Town furnished numbers.

Dr. Scott summarized the FY04 Professional Development activities and discussed how Professional Development advances the District Improvement Plans for FY04 and FY05. He explained that, per contract, teachers can expend up to \$500 on professional development. The amount budgeted in FY04 was utilized in its entirety by those teachers who submitted for reimbursement as well as a number of math workshops and an effective class management course that were offered to the teachers. There were also five mentors who assisted five newer teachers.

Public Participation:

Laura Baker, Shirley resident, commented that the idea of consolidating bus stops is a good one. She also commented that she had spoken with Chief Thibideau about a walking program. With this program, children would walk to school along a designated route. Adult volunteers would also walk along this route, ensuring safety of the children as they walked to school as well as supervision. Several committee members commented that this was a great idea and asked that it be presented to the school council.

Cheryl Hayden, FinCom representative and Shirley resident, commented that the town really needs sidewalks if the committee is to look into having more students walk to school. Currently, the only sidewalks in town are in Shirley Village.

Cliff Bailey, Shirley resident, spoke about the original cuts that were made to the school budget.

Mr. Parker motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Muffoletto seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Karen Gutheil